

New Lead Seals from Aphrodisias

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This paper presents twelve lead seals excavated at the site of Aphrodisias in Caria over the period 1984–2018. The seals are catalogued consecutively from those published by John Nesbitt in 1983 so as to maintain a consistent Aphrodisian corpus. Nesbitt's seals derive principally from the Bishop's Palace and reflect the archival processes of a bishop's residence (*episkopeion*) that flourished in the tenth and eleventh centuries—hence the generally later dates for his corpus. The new specimens were unearthed in various contexts in the eastern part of the site. They present a different chronological range, with the eighth and ninth centuries particularly well represented. Lead seals are therefore of crucial importance for the study of the site during a period for which ceramics are difficult to recognize and coins are almost entirely absent.

The opening discussion addresses the archaeological contexts in which the seals were found. Commentary on individual seals follows in the catalogue. Highlights include a tenth-century skeuophylax of Hagia Sophia, an eleventh-century official stationed in distant Charsianon, and a ninth-century strategos of the Thrakesion. The last of these seals may have consequences for the thorny issue of the northern limit of the theme of the Kibyrrhaiotai.

Aphrodisias is located in the plain of the river Morsynos, a tributary of the Maeander in southwestern Asia Minor (fig. 1). The site was a prosperous late antique provincial capital, and continued to be occupied throughout the Middle Byzantine, Seljuk, and

Ottoman periods. The town was officially christened Stauropolis around the end of the sixth century, though this name does not seem to have found much popular currency.¹ Middle Byzantine texts and later seals use the name Caria, an inheritance from the late Roman province and diocese of which Aphrodisias was capital.² Medieval Caria was the metropolitan see of the eponymous ecclesiastical diocese, the site of a long-established cult of the archangel Michael, and the administrative center of a fiscal diocese (*dioikesis*).³

1 C. Roueché, "From Aphrodisias to Stauropolis," in *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected: Essays Presented by Colleagues, Friends, and Pupils*, ed. J. Drinkwater and B. Salway, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Suppl., 91 (London, 2007), 183–92.

2 The date at which Caria replaced Stauropolis is discussed extensively by J. W. Nesbitt, "Byzantine Lead Seals from Aphrodisias," *DOP* 37 (1983): 159–64. He concludes that the denomination of the see had changed already in the eighth century. Stauropolis survives on the seals of the fiscal administration (e.g., DO BZS.1955.1.1360, a dioikites of the tenth century). For mentions of Caria in literary texts, see C. Mango, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Ignatios, the Deacon* (DOT 11, 1997), nos. 9, 19, 20; "Letters of Alexander of Nicaea," in J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (Paris, 1960), nos. 1.1, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J. A. van Dieten, CFHB 11.1 (Berlin, 1975), 400. For sigillographic examples, see Nesbitt, "Seals from Aphrodisias."

3 On the cult of Michael at Aphrodisias, see H. G. Jeffery, "Eight Hundred Years of the Cult of the Archangels at Aphrodisias/Stauropolis: Modern and Ancient Narratives," in *Trends and Turning Points: Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World*, ed. M. Kinloch and A. MacFarlane (Leiden, 2019), 205–28.



Fig. 1. Aphrodisias within the Maeander region. Courtesy of the NYU Aphrodisias project.

Several late antique churches and an enormous basilical cathedral were maintained and reconstructed.⁴ There is growing evidence for medieval occupation, and abundant Middle Byzantine coins testify to a thriving monetized economy.⁵

Excavations have also unearthed a sizeable corpus of Byzantine lead seals—the largest such catalogue for any site in Asia Minor. John Nesbitt published twenty-five specimens, representing the strikes of twenty-three distinct devices known as *boulloteria*; presented below are those seals excavated after his publication, from 1984 to 2018. They have been assigned numbers starting from Nesbitt’s last catalogue entry. It is hoped that such maintenance of a coherent Aphrodisias corpus will aid in both ease of reference and future expansion. The seals published in 1983 were presented without

reference to their find locations. In the discussion that follows, the principal archaeological contexts in which the seals were discovered—the Bishop’s Palace, the Tetrapylon Street, and a medieval residence partially uncovered during excavation prior to the expansion of the site museum—are addressed. Analysis therefore covers both the older and the new seals.⁶ This is followed by some conclusions on the contribution of the new seals to the history of medieval Aphrodisias, particularly with regard to the “Transitional Period” of the seventh to ninth centuries.

Nineteen of Nesbitt’s seals and two of the new examples (seals nos. 27, 33) were found within or just outside of the Bishop’s Palace (fig. 2).⁷ The residences

4 R. Cormack, “The Temple as the Cathedral,” in *Aphrodisias Papers: Recent Work on Architecture and Sculpture*, ed. C. Roueché and K. T. Erim (Ann Arbor, 1990), 75–88; Ö. Dalgıç, “Early Christian and Byzantine Churches,” in *Aphrodisias V: The Aphrodisias Regional Survey*, ed. C. Ratté and P. D. De Staebler (Mainz, 2012), 367–97.

5 H. G. Jeffery, “The Archaeology of Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2019).

6 A summary of find locations for the 1983 seals is provided in the catalogue below.

7 Of the remaining six older seals, four were stray finds (fig. 2: B.Pal; fig. 2; seals nos. 2, 13, 22, 23). A sixth-century iconographic seal was discovered within a late antique house in the northeastern area of the city (fig. 3: WCh). The seal of a late eleventh-century chartophylax was found during excavations immediately south of the stadium, and that of an eighth-century notarios within the western portico of the Place of Palms (fig. 3: S.Ag; seal no. 15).

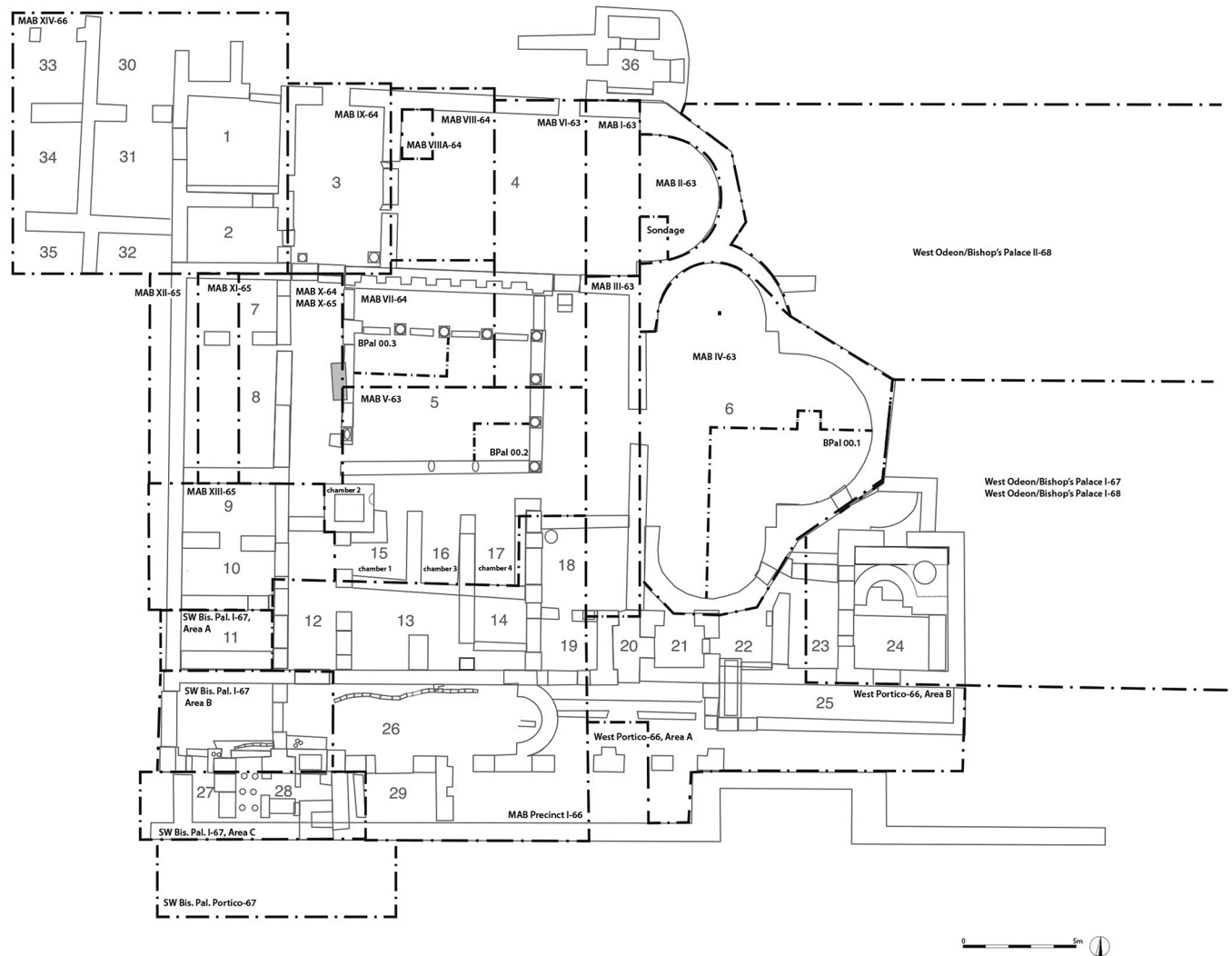


Fig. 2. Aphrodisias Bishop's Palace, with trench plans and rooms numbered according to Berenfeld (forthcoming). Reproduced with permission of Michelle Berenfeld and the NYU Aphrodisias project.

of Middle Byzantine bishops are rarely mentioned in texts or identified in the archaeological record. The residence at Aphrodisias is therefore a highly unusual and valuable survival.⁸ It consists of a refurbished late antique town house, with some later expansions to the south and west. Rooms center on a peristyle courtyard and grand triconch audience chamber. The house at least partially collapsed and was abandoned in the seventh century. The latest coins sealed by destruction

deposits were minted during the reign of Constans II (641–688).⁹ During the Transitional Period much of the house may have been in ruins, and in places large deposits of earth accumulated prior to the collapse of the upper walls. The shell was subsequently renovated and new marble paving laid above rubble fills. Dating this reconstruction has proved problematic. However, seal no. 33 may offer some useful evidence. This tenth-century piece was found in 2000 below a patch of

8 See M. L. Berenfeld, "The Triconch House and the Predecessors of the Bishop's Palace at Aphrodisias," *AJA* 113.2 (2009): 203–29; eadem, *Aphrodisias XII: The Triconch House* (Mainz, forthcoming).

9 Aphrodisias inventory no. 66-347, 66-348, 66-349.



KEY

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. STADIUM | 13. THEATER |
| 2. NORTH TEMENOS HOUSE | 14. TETRASTOON |
| 3. TEMPLE OF APHRODITE / CATHEDRAL | 15. THEATER BATHS |
| 4. TETRAPYLON | 16. "GAUDIN'S FOUNTAIN" |
| 5. SCULPTORS' WORKSHOP | 17. "GAUDIN'S GYMNASIUM" |
| 6. "BISHOP'S PALACE" | 18. TETRAKTION / TRICONCH CHURCH |
| 7. BOULEUTERION | 19. BASILICA |
| 8. NORTH AGORA | 20. HADRIANIC BATHS |
| 9. WATER CHANNEL AREA | 21. SOUTH AGORA |
| 10. ATRIUM HOUSE | 22. AGORA GATE |
| 11. SEBASTEION | 23. MUSEUM |
| 12. CRYPTOPORTICUS HOUSE | 24. EXCAVATION HOUSE |

APHRODISIAS

STATE PLAN WITH CITY GRID

0 150 300m

DRAWN 1:7500

H. MARK, 2005



revised 7/28/05

Fig. 3. Aphrodisias sector plan. Courtesy of the NYU Aphrodisias project.

tile paving in the triconch hall.¹⁰ The seal gives only a secure terminus post quem for a small repair operation, but likely indicates that the residence was reoccupied by this time. Seal no. 27, that of an eighth-century patrikios, was found in 2002 during cleaning of the small chapel immediately north of the peristyle. This brings the number of eighth-century seals found in the Bishop's Palace to three (including nos. 1a, 1b), possibly indicating occupation during the Transitional Period, though unlike seal no. 33 the others were not stratigraphically sealed within the structure of the residence.

The Tetrapylon Street runs north–south between the Tetrapylon and the west gateway (*propylon*) of the Sebasteion (fig. 3, from 4. Tetrapylon to 11. Sebasteion). This artery remained in use well into the twentieth century, with an accumulation of successive road surfaces and associated occupation layers.¹¹ Its excavation has allowed for the investigation of post-antique settlement at Aphrodisias, including significant Middle Byzantine levels. These have yielded large numbers of coins, ceramics both local and imported, and high-quality glass finds.¹² Seals from this street are more likely to be discarded waste than to reflect in situ archival processes. They demonstrate remarkable continuity throughout the Transitional Period: a late sixth- or seventh-century Theodore, a seventh-century Theodotos or Theophylaktos, a ninth-century strategos, a late ninth-century imperial kandidatos, an early tenth-century skeuophylax of Hagia Sophia.¹³

In 2006 several test trenches were dug in anticipation of the construction of the Sebasteion Hall immediately north of the on-site museum (fig. 3:23.

Museum).¹⁴ This area in the northeast of the ancient city is quite removed from its monumental center and has been relatively little investigated. In the twentieth century the village of Geyre, whose name is a corruption of the Byzantine Caria, extended from this area toward the theatre. It may well be the case that this was also the center of medieval inhabitation. The 2006 trenches uncovered a series of rooms first articulated in the Augustan period. The latest occupation within these rooms was medieval, as evidenced by material above a floor of ceramic tiles and sealed beneath the collapse of the roof and upper walls. Ceramics included fragments of a yellow-brown glazed chafing dish and sherds of nonmetropolitan Glazed White Ware that Muradiye Öztaşkın has dated to the tenth through twelfth centuries. Seals nos. 28 and 29 were found alongside these sherds. They belonged to a strategos active in the eighth century, and a tourmarch named Sisinnios who was perhaps a contemporary. It is even possible that the tourmarch was the subordinate officer of the strategos.¹⁵ It follows from the associated ceramics that these seals may have been in circulation for at least two centuries. Ought we to imagine that a written document of the eighth century was preserved into the Middle Byzantine period proper? The archaeological evidence is perhaps too ambiguous to be certain.

Only two of the new seals can be placed in the eleventh century. A certain Nicholas employed a seal that did not specify dignity or office. Nicholas's seal was uncovered during excavation near a gateway in the east stoa of the North Agora, which likely communicated with the Tetrapylon Street (fig. 3: N.Ag.).¹⁶ Of greater interest is the seal of an official named George who was stationed at Charsianon in eastern Cappadocia in the first half of the eleventh century. It was found near the center of the North Agora in an area without medieval occupation.¹⁷ Nesbitt's observation that no seal of the twelfth century had been excavated at Aphrodisias, for which he

10 This seal and the second one discovered there, with provisional readings supplied by the present author, will also be presented in Berenfeld's forthcoming monograph (supra, n. 8).

11 B. Yıldırım, "Excavations on the Tetrapylon Street, 2008–9," in *Aphrodisias Papers 5: Excavation and Research at Aphrodisias, 2006–2012*, ed. R. R. R. Smith et al. (Portsmouth, RI, 2016), 36–47; E. Ögüş, "Excavations on the Tetrapylon Street, 2010–11," in *Aphrodisias Papers 5*, 48–57; A. Sokolicek, "Excavations on the Tetrapylon Street, 2012–14," in *Aphrodisias Papers 5*, 58–77.

12 See M. Öztaşkın, "Byzantine and Turkish Glazed Pottery Finds from Aphrodisias," in *Glazed Pottery of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea Region, 10–18th Centuries*, ed. S. Bocharov, V. François, and A. Sitdikov (Kazan, 2017), 165–88; Sokolicek, "Excavations on the Tetrapylon Street," 71.

13 Seals nos. 24, 26, 30, 31, 32, below.

14 These excavations are discussed in detail by P. D. De Staebler, "Excavations in the Atrium House, North Agora, and Northeast Sector (2006–7)," in *Aphrodisias Papers 5*, 137–50.

15 Seals nos. 28, 29, below.

16 C. Ratté and R. R. R. Smith, "Archaeological Research at Aphrodisias in Caria, 1999–2001," *AJA* 108.2 (2004): 145–86.

17 C. Ratté and R. R. R. Smith, "Archaeological Research at Aphrodisias in Caria, 2002–2005," *AJA* 112.4 (2008): 713–51.

suggested as probable cause the disruption caused by incursions of Turkmen nomads,¹⁸ is not contested by any of the newly found seals.

As said, the majority of seals published in 1983 could be dated to the tenth and eleventh centuries, since the assemblage mostly reflected archival activities and communications relating to the Bishop's Palace, which flourished during this period. The seals presented here, found predominantly outside of ecclesiastical contexts, offer insights into different aspects of administrative presence. Most significantly, they attest to the activities of thematic commanders—two strategoi and a tourmarch—of the eighth and ninth centuries.¹⁹ Occupation dating to this Transitional Period is frequently illegible in the archaeological record. Ceramics are coarse, locally produced forms that are difficult to distinguish, though Öztaşkın has been able to observe a sharp increase across the site around the end of the ninth century.²⁰ Copper alloy coinage ceases to reach most of Asia Minor after the reign of Constans II.²¹ At Aphrodisias, regular supply

only resumes during that of Leo VI (886–912).²² The new sigillographic evidence from Aphrodisias makes an important contribution to studies of the function of the Byzantine city subsequent to the establishment of the theme system,²³ demonstrating that the former provincial capital remained a site of administration under the strategoi of the Thrakesion theme.

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18 Nesbitt, "Seals from Aphrodisias," 160.

19 Seals nos. 28, 29, 30, below.

20 Öztaşkın, "Pottery Finds from Aphrodisias," 166; cf. A. K. Vionis, J. Poblome, and M. Waelkens, "The Hidden Material Culture of the Dark Ages: Early Medieval Ceramics at Sagalassos (Turkey). New Evidence (ca AD 650–800)," *Anatolian Studies* 59 (2009): 147–65.

21 C. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation," in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. E. Laiou, 3 vols. (Washington, DC, 2002), 3:909–66; C. S. Lightfoot, "Byzantine Anatolia:

Reassessing the Numismatic Evidence," *Revue numismatique* 158 (2002): 229–39.

22 Jeffery, "Archaeology of Middle Byzantine Aphrodisias."

23 W. Brandes, "Byzantine Cities in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries—Different Sources, Different Histories?," in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G. P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (Leiden, 1999), 25–57; J. Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); E. A. Ivison, "Amorium and the Byzantine Dark Ages (Seventh to Ninth Centuries)," in *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, vol. 2: *Byzantium, Pliska, and the Balkans*, ed. J. Henning (Berlin, 2007), 25–59; F. R. Trombley, "Byzantine 'Dark Age' Cities in Comparative Context," in *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, vol. 1: *Hellenic Antiquity and Byzantium*, ed. J. S. Langdon et al. (New York, 1993), 429–49; M. J. Decker, *The Byzantine Dark Ages* (New York, 2016).

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Catalogue

Summary of Nesbitt (1983) with find locations

- 1a. Michael, metropolitan of Caria (eighth c.); Inv. 66-155; B.Pal room 14 or 18.
- 1b. Michael, metropolitan of Caria (eighth c.); Inv. 63-293; B.Pal peristyle courtyard.
2. Joseph, metropolitan of Caria (tenth c.); no Inv.; stray find?
3. Michael, metropolitan of Caria (tenth c.); Inv. 63-077; B.Pal peristyle courtyard.
4. Isaiah, bishop of Brioula (tenth c.); Inv. 66-319; B.Pal room 31.
5. Eusebios, bishop of . . . (?) (tenth c.); Inv. 66-320; B.Pal room 13.
- 6a. John, (metropolitan) of Caria (eleventh c.); Inv. 66-315; B.Pal room 32.
- 6b. John, (metropolitan) of Caria (eleventh c.); Inv. 67-367; room 27 or 28.
7. Niketas, chartophylax (second-half eleventh c.); Inv. 68-410; Stad.
8. Theodore, imperial spatharios and kourator (first-half ninth c.); Inv. 65-187; B.Pal room 8.
9. John, hypatos and chartoularios of the genikon logothesion (ninth c.); Inv. 68-382; immediately east of B.Pal.
10. Constantine, patrikios and genikos logothetes (tenth c.); Inv. 66-309; B.Pal room 32.
11. Kaleotes, imperial spatharios and dioiketes (tenth c.); Inv. 66-162; immediately south of B.Pal.
12. Lykastos Dikesion, protonotarios (tenth c.); Inv. 66-310; B.Pal room 32.
13. Theophylaktos, magistros (tenth c.); no Inv.; stray find?
14. Stylanios, imperial spatharokandidatos and askretis (tenth c.); Inv. 65-506; N.Ag north stoa.
15. Iconographic seal (sixth c.); Inv. 62-022; Water Channel House.
16. N. Notarios (eighth c.); Inv. 66-042; S.Ag. Portico of Tiberius, western section.
17. An unused seal blank; Inv. 65-061; immediately east of the Cathedral (Temple-Church).
18. John, imperial protospatharios (tenth c.); Inv. 68-410; immediately east of B.Pal.
19. Joseph (tenth c.); Inv. 65-454; immediately east of B.Pal.
20. Anonymous seal (eleventh c.); Inv. 65-188; immediately east of B.Pal.
21. John (eleventh c.); Inv. 67.439; B.Pal room 26.
22. Illegible (eleventh c.); no Inv.; stray find?
23. Iconographic seal (eleventh c.); no Inv.; stray find?



24. Theodore (late sixth/seventh c.)

Inventory no.: 09-054—D. 27 mm.

Context: Tetrapylon Street 09.4, SU 71.

Obv.: Bust of the Virgin, nimbate, wearing maphorion. Before her is the medallion of Christ with nimbus cruciger. Two crosses in field to l. and r. Wreath border.

Rev.: Cruciform monogram. Upper arm is missing. Letters: Δ-Ε-Θ-Ρ-Ω. Wreath border.

Θεοδώρου

(Seal) of Theodore.

Commentary: Theodore employs a common early iconographic scheme on the obverse of his seal.²⁴ His reverse monogram matches perfectly Zacos and

24 Cf. V. Laurent, *La collection C. Orghidan* (Paris, 1952), nos. 577, 601; G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1972), nos. 1110–1117; DO BZS.1947.2.1716.

Veglery's type 181, as found on their seal no. 518, that of a Theodore chartoularios dated 550–650.²⁵ A contemporary seal of a metropolitan named Theodore in the DO collection configures the cruciform monogram in the same manner.²⁶



25. Theodore, metropolitan (late sixth/seventh c.)

Inventory no.: 17-094—D. 25 mm.

Context: Place of Palms (South Agora) 17.1, SU 4328.

Obv.: Cruciform monogram. Letters: Δ-Ε-Θ-Ο-Ρ-Ο-Ω. Wreath border.

Θεοδώρου

Rev.: Cruciform monogram. Letters: Η-Ι-Λ-Μ-Ο-Π-Ρ-Τ-Ο. Wreath border.

μητροπολίτου

(Seal) of Theodore the metropolitan.

Commentary: Though there is no need to assume that this Theodore is the same individual as is attested by the above piece, they may well have been contemporaries. The composition of the *μητροπολίτου* monogram is identical to that on the reverse DO specimen mentioned above with regard to its obverse monogram Θεοδώρου.

A bishop Theodore of Stauropolis is known to have attended the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681, though since Theodore is a perfectly common name and the seal does not specify any particular metropolitan see it could very well belong to another metropolitan of the period.²⁷ It was uncovered within an artificial dump deposit made on the floor of the monumental pool within the Place of Palms,

representing the clearing of rubble in response to catastrophic destruction.²⁸ The latest coin in a stratigraphic unit assumed by the excavators to represent the same event was minted in 643/4.²⁹ This provides a terminus post quem for the final deposition of this seal.



26. Theodotos/Theophylaktos (seventh c.)

Inventory no.: C.2016.001—D. 26 mm.

Context: Tetrapylon Street 16.1, SU 1142.

Obv.: Cruciform monogram. Legible letters: Θ-Δ-Τ, possibly also Ε-Φ.

Θεοδότου (?), Θεοφυλάκτου (?)

Rev.: Illegible. Very faint traces of a cruciform monogram.

(Seal) of Theodotos/Theophylaktos

Commentary: The ligature topping the vertical arm demonstrates that this is a proper name in the genitive case rather than an invocative monogram. However, the poor state of preservation renders the name difficult to read. To the right is a rounded letterform; below, a triangular letterform (suggesting Δ); and that to the left is perhaps rounded but possibly a poorly struck kappa.

Two names are possible. The extant letters could be read Θεοδότου, with the remaining crossarms presenting delta, epsilon, and an omicron. But this would necessitate a redundant omicron, and the small number of distinct letters in Θεοδότου usually obviates the need for any to be placed at the center of a cross monogram.³⁰ If one were to extract a phi

25 Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, pls. 61, 235.

26 DO BZS.1951.31.5.3237; V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, 2 vols. in 5 (Paris, 1963–81), 5/1, no. 947.

27 PBE 1 (2001/2015) Theodore 30.

28 A. Wilson, "Water, Nymphs and a Palm Grove: Monumental Water Display at Aphrodisias," in Smith et al., *Aphrodisias Papers* 5, 100–35. A collaborative monograph publication on the Place of Palms is currently under preparation.

29 Stratigraphic Unit S.Ag.17.1.4482.

30 Cf. DO BZS.1951.31.5.2985; BZS.1958.106.3983.

and an epsilon from the cruciform letter at the center of our monogram, it would be possible to construct the name Θεοφυλάκτου with the addition of an alpha, a lambda, and a kappa on the crossarms.³¹ Alternatively, the alpha/lambda might be combined and the epsilon placed on the crossarm.³² Theophylaktos might therefore be preferred.



27. John, patrikios (late seventh/eighth c.)

Inventory no.: C.00.223—D. 25 mm.

Context: In the Bishop's Palace, just to the west of the stylobate in the eastern apse of room 4. The seal was found during cleaning of the floor in 2000.

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram (type V).

In the quarters: ΤΩ—CΩ|ΔΘ—ΛΩ. Wreath border.

Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ

Rev.: A cruciform monogram. Letters:

Α—Η—Ι—Ν—Ω. In the quarters: Α—ΤΡΙ|Κ—ΙΩ. Wreath border.

Ἰωάννη πατρικίῳ

Mother of God help your servant John the patrikios.

Commentary: The DO collection includes a parallel specimen.³³ Not only is the seal matrix identical, the DO seal exhibits the same off-center strike on the lead blank with a resulting bulge to the lower right of the piece.



28. N. patrikios, imperial protospatharios, and strategos (eighth c.)

Inventory no.: 06-080—D. 28 mm.

Context: Museum, Northeast Sector 40, SU 16.

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram (Type VIII or XII). In the quarters: ΤΩ—C. | ΔΘ—...

No visible border

[Κ(ύρι)ε βοή(θη)θ(ει)] τῷ σ[ῷ] δού[λῳ]

Rev.: Inscription in five lines. No visible border.

... Α Π. | ... Α' ΠΑΤΡ. | ... Β' Α' ΣΠΑΘ | ... ΡΑ' ΤΗ | ...

... απ... α πατρ[ικίῳ] β[ασilikῶ]
(πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίῳ) [(καὶ) στ]ρατη[γ(ῶ)]

Lord help your servant [name] patrikios,
imperial protospatharios, and strategos.

Commentary: Vivien Prigent suggests that the final line probably contained an ornament. The combination of legible dignities is perfectly conventional, and several seals of roughly contemporary strategoi of the Thrakesion in the DO collection present similar, though not identical, reverse inscriptions.³⁴

A problem arises in the alpha with an abbreviation mark preceding the dignity patrikios. Is this the end of a personal name, or might it indicate a further title? The only appropriate title that might coexist with patrikios, imperial protospatharios, and strategos is anthypatos, and while this might be extrapolated from the surviving letters, the combination anthypatos-patrikios generally appears significantly later than the eighth century. It is therefore more likely that the reverse commenced with a proper name. Apelates would be a possible candidate, but

31 Cf. Ü. Demirel and N. Elam, "Lead Seals of the Kibyra Excavations," *Adalya* 21 (2018): 264, no. 10.

32 Cf. DO BZS.1958.106.4587.

33 DO BZS.1958.106.3575.

34 DO BZS.1947.2.181; DO BZS.1951.315.2104; DO BZS.1958.106.2025; DO BZS.1955.1.1314.

it is not possible to infer whether the initial alpha is preceded by a letter or a decoration.



29. Sisinnios, tourmarch (eighth/ninth c.)

Inventory no.: 06-081—D. 28 mm.

Context: Museum, Northeast Sector 40, SU 16.

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram (type V).

In the quarters: ΤΩ—CΩ|.Δ—ΛΩ. Wreath border. Pierced through Θ at the center of the monogram.

Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ [δ]ούλῳ

Rev.: Inscription in four lines (first line is missing). Wreath border.

... ÇI|CINIΩ|ΤΟΥΡ|ΜΑΡ:

Σισίνιω τουρμάρχη

Mother of God help your servant
Sisinnios the tourmarch.

Commentary: The cruciform motif that concludes the final line of the reverse inscription could be interpreted as either chi or a cross, both of which would make sense in this position.³⁵

This tourmarch is otherwise unattested in literary or sigillographic sources.

A Sisinnios, supposedly a relative of Constantine V, was strategos of the Thrakesion theme in the early 740s.³⁶ However, since strategoi tended to be appointed to themes in which they had little personal interest, it is highly unlikely that our seal belongs to an earlier stage in this individual's career. It is regrettable that Sisinnios's seal mentions no dignity—kandidatos or spatharios might be expected—nor the theme within which his tourma was stationed.

35 Cf. V. Laurent, *Les sceaux byzantins du Médailleur Vatican* (Vatican, 1962), no. 151.

36 PBE 1 (2001/2015) Sisinnios 3.



30. Paul, imperial spatharios and strategos of the Thrakesion (ninth c.)

Inventory no.: C.2015.090 —D. 25 mm.

Context: Tetracylon Street 15.1, SU 1103.

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram (type V).

Letters: Θ—Κ. In lower left quarter: Δ...

Wreath border.

Θεοτόκε βοήθει [τῷ σῷ] δ[ούλῳ]

Rev.: Inscription of four lines, the first of which is missing.

... ΣΠΑΘ|... ΑΤΘΡ|... CΙΩ

[name] ... σπαθ(αρίῳ)
[(καὶ) στρα(τηγῷ) τ(ῶν) Θρ[ακη]σίων

Mother of God help your servant [name] ... spatharios and strategos of [the theme of] the Thrakesians.

Commentary: This seal may find a parallel in a Fogg specimen published by Nesbitt and Oikonomides, though the poor state of preservation of both pieces precludes certainty.³⁷ Both seals are struck on blanks too small for the boulloterion. The Fogg seal likely preserves the upper/left part of the inscription, the Aphrodisias seal the lower/right. Combining the two readings allows for the reconstruction of almost the entire reverse text:

... ΑΥ|ΩΒ-ΣΠΑΘ|ΣΤΡΑΤΘΡ|ΚΗ CΙΩ

[Π]αύ[λ]ῳ β(ασιλικῷ) σπαθ(αρίῳ) (καὶ)
στρα(τηγῷ) τ(ῶν) Θρ[ακη]σιων(ν).

Paul, imperial spatharios and strategos of
[the theme of] the Thrakesians.

37 Fogg.3357: J. Nesbitt and N. Oikonomides, eds., *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC, 1991–2009), 3: 20, 2.50.

The genitive plural ending for the theme reflects the identification of the military/administrative unit with the soldiers rather than the land—in this case the descendants of the late Roman army under command of the *magister militum per Thracias*.³⁸

It is not immediately clear whether Stauropolis would have fallen within the jurisdiction of the Thrakesion during the ninth century.³⁹ Strategoi of this theme were certainly active in the Maeander valley. A metric inscription found in 1874 in the village of Kemer asks for intercession on behalf of a strategos of the Thrakesion.⁴⁰ It was likely engraved to record the construction of the medieval walls of Magnesia, which to judge from the letterforms of this inscription may date to a similar period as our seal.⁴¹ Clive Foss has even suggested that the capital of the theme may have been in the Lykos valley.⁴² In terms of ease of movement and transport, the Morsynos valley communicates most easily with the Maeander region to the northwest, though it is possible to reach the south coast by first heading east onto the Tabai plain. Following this route, one would soon reach territory under the jurisdiction of the strategos of the Kibyrrhaiotai. The problematic issue is the precise boundary between these two themes. An itinerary supposedly representing the northern limit of the theme of the Kibyrrhaiotai is given in *De Thematribus* of Constantine VII: the route begins at Miletos and leads to Sagalassos via Stratonikieia, Hagias, Tauropolis, Mogola (Muğla), Tlos, Oenoanda, Podalia, and Anemoteichos.⁴³ The last of these we may amend to Panemoteichos, a minor Pisidian

settlement with Hellenistic origins.⁴⁴ It might appear reasonable to likewise amend Tauropolis to Stauropolis. Nesbitt and Oikonomides therefore place the Morsynos within the territory of the Kibyrrhaiotai in their geographically organized catalogue of seals.⁴⁵ However, this would insert an inland outlier into an itinerary that does not otherwise break northward until it reaches Pisidia.

There is one further issue to be addressed. Constantine's *De Thematribus* assumes that the Kibyra after which the Kibyrrhaiotai were named was an otherwise insignificant settlement on the coast of Pamphylia.⁴⁶ It has been speculated that the original capital of the theme may have been the much larger Carian Kibyra.⁴⁷ This would shift the theme further inland, and one would be justified in considering central and eastern Caria to have fallen within the remit of the Kibyrrhaiotai. Carian Kibyra was the protothronos of the metropolitan diocese of Caria, whose capital was at Aphrodisias.⁴⁸ Ecclesiastical dioceses do not necessarily align with military themes. But were we to accept a Carian capital for the theme, then the Morsynos valley would be brought somewhere near the administrative frontier.

I believe it safest to attribute the Morsynos to the Thrakesion. The evidence for pushing the frontier of the Kibyrrhaiotai into northeastern Caria is too fragmentary, and it seems better to follow the logistical affordances of the geography. Moreover, the discovery of this seal at Aphrodisias provides new and independent evidence that points to this conclusion.

38 J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1997), 212–15.

39 "Thrakesion," *ODB* (1991/2005).

40 B. Haussoullier, "Dédicace d'un stratège des Thrakiens," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, ed. A. Blanchet and G. Millet (Paris, 1924), 101–4.

41 M. Whittow, "Social and Political Structures in the Maeander Region of Western Asia Minor on the Eve of the Turkish Invasion" (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1987), 145–46.

42 C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979), 196.

43 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Thematribus*, ed. A. Pertusi (Vatican, 1952), bk 14, 31–37.

44 S. Mitchell, "Three Cities in Pisidia," *Anatolian Studies* 44 (1994): 129–48, at 137.

45 Nesbitt and Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, 150, 167.

46 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Thematribus*, bk. 14, 25–40.

47 V. Laurent, *Corpus*, 5/1: 382; Whittow, "Social and Political Structures," 286; P. A. Yannopoulos, "Cibyrra et Cibyrreotes," *Byzantion* 61, no. 2 (1991): 520–29. The suggestion is rejected by Nesbitt and Oikonomides (*Catalogue of Byzantine Seals*, 167).

48 Hierokles, *Synekdemos*, ed. E. Honigsmann, as *Le Synekdomos d'Hieroklès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Brussels, 1939), 690.



31. Theosostos, imperial kandidatos
(mid-late ninth c.)

Inventory no.: 85-096—D. 21 mm.

Context: Sebasteion, cleaning of an overgrown area.

Obv.: Cruciform invocative monogram (type V). In the quarters: ΤΩ–CΩ|ΔΧ–ΛΩ. Wreath border.

Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ

Rev.: Inscription of four lines beginning with a cross. Wreath border.

+ΘΕΟ|CΩCΤΩ|ΡΚΑΝΔ|ΗΔΑΤ

Θεοσώστῳ β(ασιλικῷ) κανδηδάτ(ῳ)

Mother of God help your servant
Theosostos imperial kandidatos.

Commentary: The forms for beta (obv. and rev.) and kappa (rev.) indicate a date somewhere in the second half of the ninth century.

Theosostos is an unusual and interesting name. Epigraphically, Theosostos is an epithet for cities under divine protection. Christos Tsatsoulis argues that it conveys the idea of a last-minute, aoristic salvation.⁴⁹ As a personal name it appears to be the preserve of monks. Two Theosostoi, an abbas and a hegoumenos, are known from the correspondence of Theodore the Studite.⁵⁰ The aorist logic of the monastic name would be similar to the urban epithet, the individuals saved through the event of their assuming monastic habit. However, the Theosostos of this seal advertised his status as imperial kandidatos, a dignity that would imply the tenure of a minor post in the military or civic administration incompatible with the monastic life.

49 Ch. Tsatsoulis, "The Use of the Terms θεόσωστος and θεοφύλακτος in the Byzantine Epigraphic and Sigillographic Tradition," in *Inscriptions in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine History and History of Art*, ed. Ch. Stavrakos (Wiebaden, 2016), 159–76, at 160–64.

50 PBE 1 (2001/2015) Theosostos 1 and 2.



32. Ioses, skeuophylax of the Great Church
(early tenth c.)

Inventory no.: 14-041—D. 22 mm.

Context: Tetracylon Street 14.1, SU 1037.

Obv.: Bust of St. Bartholomew, bearded and nimbate, holding in his right hand the martyr's cross. Within concentric borders of dots an inscription, beginning at seven o'clock:

+ΡΑΡΘΟΛΟΜΑΙΕΡΟΗΘΕΙ

Βαρθολομαῖε βοήθει

Rev.: Inscription of five lines beginning with a cross. Border of dots.

ΙΩΧΗ|CΚΕΥΟΦΥΛ|ΑΚΙΤΗCΜΕ|
ΓΑΛΗCΕΚ|ΛΗCΙΑC

Ιωσή σκευοφύλακι τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας

Bartholomew, help Ioses skeuophylax
of the Great Church.

Commentary: This represents the first attestation of St. Bartholomew on a lead seal. Prigent has suggested an explanation for the seal's peculiar iconography: Ioses is not an abbreviated form of the common name Joseph but the birth name of St. Barnabas, the evangelical companion of St. Paul. Sts. Bartholomew and Barnabas are venerated together on their joint feast day, and Ioses has recreated this liturgical association in the iconography of his seal.



33. N. dioiketes (tenth c.)

Inventory no.: C.00.153—D. 20 mm.

Context: In the Bishop's Palace, beneath a patch of medieval tile paving in the floor of the east apse of room 6.

Obv.: A Latin cross on three steps with floral ornament in the quarters. Within a border of dots, a circular inscription likely beginning at seven o'clock:

...ΤΩΩΔ. Λ.

(Κύριε/Θεοτόκε βοήθει) τῷ σῷ δ(ού)λ(ω)

Rev.: Inscription of four lines beginning with a cross. Border of dots.

+I...|ΜΑΓ...|ΔΙΟΚ. |Τ!

+ [name] μαγ... διοικ(η)τι

Lord/Mother of God help your servant,
[name] ... dioiketes.

Commentary: Only the latter part of the reverse may be read with any certainty since the seal is badly damaged and its faces worn. The name on the first line appears to begin with an iota, allowing for John, Joseph, etc. The second line presents the greater problem. Three letters survive, with a clear alpha at center. The flanking letters are much more difficult to identify. To left is a mu or perhaps kappa, while to the right is a gamma or perhaps rho.



34. George, protospatharios and chartoularios of the dromos of Charsianon (first-half eleventh c.)

Inventory no.: C.02.024/Inv.02-023—D. 25 mm.

Context: North Agora 02.3.

Obv.: Bust of St. George, nimbate, holding lance and shield. Sigla to I., Θ|Γ|Ε to r., Ω|Ρ|Γ. Border of dots.

ὁ ἄ(γιος) Γεώργ(ιος)

Rev.: Inscription of five lines. Border of dots.—•—|ΓΕΩΡΓ|ΑCΠΑΘ|ΧΑΡΤΩΛ...
|ΔΡΤΩΧΑΡ|CIANΩ|—•—Γεωργ(ίω) (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρίω) [(καὶ)]
χαρτουλ[αρι(ω) τ(οῦ) δρ(όμου) τοῦ Χαρσιανοῦ]Saint George / George protospatharios and
chartoularios of the dromos of Charsianon.

Commentary: This seal was struck by the same boulloterion as a published example currently in Austria.⁵¹ That specimen is struck on a blank that was too small for the boulloterion, and consequently much of the text is lost. The Aphrodisias seal preserves the full diameter. It confirms Alexandra Wassiliou and Werner Seibt's tentative reading of Γεωργίω, though we do not find the preceding invocative formula they anticipated.⁵²

George was stationed at Charsianon, a fortress and theme in eastern Cappadocia that was home to the Argyroi and Maleinoi dynasties.⁵³ The discovery of his seal at Aphrodisias is intriguing. He is the only official of the eastern provinces so far attested at the site, and it is hard to see why his duties of

51 A. K. Wassiliou and W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2004), 2: no. 237; PBW (2016) Anonymous 20289.

52 Wassiliou and Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel*, 2: 232.

53 "Charsianon," *ODB* (1991/2005).

maintaining roads, monitoring foreign agents, and requisitioning military supplies should have necessitated correspondence with the Maeander region. Of course, it is perfectly possible that the document to which this seal was once attached was a more personal communication.



35. Nicholas (early–mid-eleventh c.)

Inventory no.: C.00.227—D. 26 mm.

Context: North Agora 0.1, SU 33.

Obv.: Bust of St. Panteleimon, beardless and nimbate, holding the martyr's cross in right hand. Sigla to left, Θ . . . , to right, . . . Λ|ΕΗ|M. Border of dots.

ὁ ἄ(γιος) [Παντε]λεήμ(ων)

Rev.: Inscription of three lines beginning with a cross. Border of dots.

+K̄ĒR̄Θ|TWCWAΔ|NIKOΛ|—•—

Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ε)ι τῷ σῷ δ(ούλῳ) Νικολ(άῳ)

Saint Panteleimon / Lord help your servant Nicholas.

Commentary: The final letter of the last line of the reverse inscription is disrupted by a large crack in the seal. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between a lambda with horizontal serifs and a delta. The former is the more likely, not least because Νικόλαος is a far more common name than Νικόδημος. Note that the decorative lines above and beneath the inscription are not the same. That below is of the pellet flanked by lines type found on variant seven of the A2 anonymous follis. That above places a long bar at center, doubling as abbreviation sign for Κύριε βοήθει.